

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS DJIBOUTI 000245

SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF AND AF/E
STATE ALSO PASS USAID FOR AFR/SD
NAIROBI FOR REDSO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EAID](#) [SCUL](#) [SOCI](#) [DJ](#)

SUBJECT: READ-OUT FROM MINISTER OF EDUCATION ON VISIT TO
U.S.

11. (U) Ambassador and USAID directly called February 23 on Minister of Education Abdi Ibrahim Absieh to obtain a read-out of his February 8-13 visit to the United States. Senior Advisor and Executive Secretary of the Ministry of Education, Aideed Aden Guedi, who traveled with Absieh, and Secretary General of the Ministry, Fathi Shamsan, sat in on

SIPDIS
the meeting.

12. (U) Absieh said his visit had been pleasant and useful. Its main purpose had been to negotiate the second World Bank USD 10 million education loan to Djibouti. The proposed three-year World Bank education program complements activities USAID/Djibouti is implementing in basic education, focusing on increasing access, instructional quality, education equity, and community participation in education. The visit also gave him the opportunity, he stated, to have face-to-face meetings with key individuals with whom he partners and to discuss issues of importance in the education sector. He said he had carried with him a proposal for funding of a national census this year, in support of education and health planning and execution. He had also carried proposals for potable water provisioning and for further development of the livestock marketing facility currently under construction with USAID funding. Absieh expressed gratitude for the lunch hosted by AF DAS Don Yamamoto at State, for the working dinner hosted by Dr. Sarah Moten, Director of AFR/SD in USAID and head of the President's Education Initiative, for the meeting with Gene Sperling of the Center for universal Education at the Council on Foreign Relations, and for other meetings arranged on his behalf.

13. (U) Absieh expressed concern over the World Bank's decision that Djibouti's per capita income of USD 915 is higher than the cut-off amount of USD 895 for "poor" developing countries and therefore a "medium level" country in terms of poverty ranking. He challenged population statistics which brought about such an assessment and insisted Djibouti's population has grown substantially in recent years. It is for this reason, he said, that a census is needed. Absieh emphasized the high poverty rate, high unemployment rate, and the low level of education in Djibouti to make the case for U.S. interim intervention with the World Bank to help Djibouti negotiate a transitional period during which it would adjust to the conditions set by this new categorization. He noted that Djibouti receives concessional loans from the Arab Development Bank and the African Development Bank and that both institutions understand Djibouti to be "poor." He added, however, that Djibouti has been invited to join the fast track program and that it would need the help of donors to prepare proposals for submission to the program.

14. (U) Absieh said he had thanked USAID for providing Djibouti with 1,500 English/French dictionaries developed by AFR/SD at USAID for use in African countries. The books would be forwarded to USAID/Djibouti for distribution. He had also expressed appreciation for approval of the Ambassador's girls scholarship program for Djibouti that would award 1,000 scholarships during the next school year in support of education of girls in the poor urban and rural areas.

RAGSDALE